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Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's Animated Movies

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1. Introduction

Do race and ethnicity still play a role in contemporary cartoons? For the Walt Disney Corporation, one of the biggest entertainment companies in existence with an annual revenue of US$ 40.893 billion in 2008 (a.media.global.go.com), it certainly does – or does it? Founded in 1923, the Disney Studios developed from a small business into one of the global players of entertainment. Disney's website proudly promotes that

> For more than eight decades, the name Walt Disney has been preeminent in the field of family entertainment. From humble beginnings as a cartoon studio in the 1920s to today's global corporation, The Walt Disney Company continues to proudly provide quality entertainment for every member of the family, across America and around the world.(The Walt Disney Company)

Celebrating their founder, Walter Elias Disney as ''[…] a pioneer, innovator, and the possessor of one of the most fertile imaginations the world has ever known''(corporate.disney.go.com), Disney at the same time advertises the 'Disney Way of Life' -a term that seems ambiguous and contested- channeled directly through the company's most influential medium, namely the animated picture.

Interdisciplinary settled in the fields of literary, film and cultural studies my Master's thesis will be comprised of an analysis of two selected animated Disney movies, both of them being successful feature length films. As already introduced in the first paragraph, the main research question, guiding my thesis will be: How are race and ethnicity presented in Walt Disney Movies? I will try to give possible answers and explanations to this question, discuss and eventually juxtapose them to other ideas and findings.

Many papers have been written about the Disney Company, its

influence on culture, its economic impact and of course the company's depiction of race, ethnicity, nationalities, sex and gender. Reaching from cherishing the corporation and its movies to harsh criticism, the opinions and theories about Disney could not be more multifaceted. Often harshly criticized to be aiming at a target audience that resembles the 'average white family' and by that, conservative middle class values, the Disney Company does its best to confute such accusations by presenting themselves as an almost universal being, merrily including everybody who wants to join the 'Disney World'.

Of course, there are also innumerable academic papers on the Disney Company's main products, namely animated movies. As the studio seems to have such a high impact on (pop) culture, countless scholars and movie critics have devoted their papers to the analysis of Disney movies. However, Race and ethnicity seem to play a subordinate role in this context. Research about these aspects in Disney movies seem slightly limited to certain academic fields, such as linguistic studies, analyzes from a pedagogical point of view or parenthetic aspects in papers written in the field of film or gender studies.

Besides the analysis of the different movies, I also intend to highlight some aspects of the respective motion pictures in terms of animation and try to link them to my analysis. I will, however not only attempt to connect the depiction of different races and ethnicities to the plot of the movie, but rather try to answer questions such as: How is a specific race or ethnicity depicted in the movie? Do different depictions contradict or complement each other, Or can they not be linked to the general, stereotypical Western awareness of race at all? The main stress of the analysis lies therefore on an attempt to find out why and how Disney uses certain techniques and aspects and to which extend the animations are a reflection of the race they depict.

The part of my thesis immediately following this introduction is

subdivided into two parts. The first section, titled **1.1 Stereotypes, Race and Ethnicity** will briefly try to introduce the reader to the very terms that serve as the title of this chapter.

Due to the fact that this thesis is concerned with literary, film and cultural and cultural studies, it is not my wish to attempt a full and detailed analysis of race, the movies as a whole, its or the characters presented in the films. The versatile character of contested terms and concepts such as race and ethnicity does not permit superficiality or generalizations. An attempt to fully grasp and describe race therefore futile from the very start. The only possibility of a description is by highlighting certain patterns and carefully linking them to definitions, theses or general overlappings, which seem to be plausible without being superficial. However, it is impossible to put a 'race' and 'ethnicity' into a tight waterproof scheme and it is not my wish to attempt this throughout my paper. I will rather try to juxtapose my readings of the movies and their respective depiction of race and ethnicity in selected scenes and characters to the findings of other authors.

It has to be stressed at this point that due to means of readability and convenience, contested terms such as Arabic, Asian or Black will be used throughout this paper in an unbiased manner. They rather function as markers that highlight aspects of the depiction of race and ethnicity in the respective movie that will be discussed in more detail throughout the chapters of this thesis.

The second introductory part of my thesis **1.2. Disney Animation: A brief overview** will eventually provide the reader with some key concepts of Disney animation, serving as background information that enhances the understanding of the Disney Company's mentalities and the different techniques of animation applied in the movies

The second and main part of my thesis, titled **2. Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's Animated Movies** will be comprised of two

different parts, each of them taking a closer look at race and ethnicity within one Disney movie. Even though the films various side-characters, I will focus my analysis mainly, but not exclusively, on those characters which I deem most central in the context of race and ethnicity. A detailed analysis of all characters featured throughout each movie is therefore not included, since such an analysis would simply burst the frame of this paper.

However, it is of course impossible to talk about one single character in isolation from the other figures presented in the respective film, or even the setting. As a movie's characters and their stories are often linked in an inseparable way, my thesis thus also aims at taking a closer look at selected side-characters without losing sight of side characters. Neglecting important factors, such as non-protagonists or the surroundings in which the action takes place would not reflect and adequate description of the movies and the different cultures they depict.

As a corpus for my research, I selected two animated Disney movies –*Aladdin* and *Pocahontas*– that were both produced during or immediately after the so-called 'Disney Renaissance' (1989-1994). From a Disney perspective, these years marked ''[…] one of the greatest comebacks in entertainment history'' (Desowitz).

However, the movies were not only chosen due to the fact that they were all highly successful at the box offices and thus, had a seemingly high impact on a large audience, but rather because of the fact that they are prominent examples of a 'Disney Way' of presenting race and ethnicity, as the following brief synopses will reveal:

Aladdin (1992)

Disney's adaptation of the Arab tale of Aladdin and the magic lamp from the compilation One Thousand and One Nights is set in the fictional 'Arabian' town of Agrabah, Aladdin tells the story of a street urchin who eventually gets hold of a magic lamp that helps him to win the heart of beautiful princess Jasmine. Aladdin, produced in 1992 and directed by Disney veterans John Musker and Ron Clements, is the Disney company's first feature length depiction of an 'Arabic culture'. Disney's adaptation of the Arab tale of Aladdin and the magic lamp from the compilation One Thousand and One Nights is set in the fictional 'Arabian' town of Agrabah in an unknown, seemingly oriental country.

Pocahontas (1995)

Disney's filmic adaptation of the North American Pocahontas myth narrates the classic American tale of the Native American, or 'Indian' princess of the same name, whose encounter with Captain John Smith eventually leads to a complicated romantic relationship between two different cultures and ethnicities.

In the third and final part of my thesis, namely my **Conclusion**, I will eventually sum up my overall findings, discuss them and link them only –to a certain extent– to some important Disney movies that are not mentioned explicitly in this paper, but also try to juxtapose my findings to different theories, opinions and ideas by other authors.

1.1. Stereotypes, Race and Ethnicity

> Are African Americans really better at basketball than Caucasians? Are blonds really dumber than brunettes? Are women really worse at math than men? The short answer is yes. The longer answer is no. (Cundiff)

As this thesis is devoted to race and ethnicity and their depiction in different films by means of animation, a brief overview of terms such as race, ethnicity and stereotypes seems crucial. As this thesis cannot give a full definition of such contested, dynamic terms –an issue already indicated in the introduction of this paper– this section aims to give the reader a brief overview of selected notions of the aforementioned terms, especially in the context of humor and animation. Throughout my paper, I will eventually come back to these 'definitions' and notions, partially using them as guides for my reading and interpretation of the depiction of race and ethnicity in Disney's movies.

For this thesis, a simplified definition of the terms race and ethnicity have to be used in order to use them as a convenient tool of describing the aspects I would like to analyze in this paper. In this context, I will explicitly refer to ‘race’ when it comes to a person’s physical appearance, e.g. skin or hair color, while using ‘ethnicity’ in the context of culture, nationality and religion of the respective analyzed character.

Stereotypes and prejudice are parts of everyday life, especially in the context of race and ethnicity. But how true are stereotypes? Terracciano et al. state that there is a considerable amount of literature on the results of the accuracy of stereotypes, showing ambivalent results, namely ''that they may or may not reflect reality'' (4). In this context, the authors highlight the issue of accuracy by stating the results of a study concerned with gender stereotypes. According to the study, stereotypes ''[…] depicting women as warm and men as assertive are widely held

around the world'' (4). Terracciano et al. state that ''[c]ross-cultural studies using both self-reports and observer ratings have shown that women in fact score higher on measures of Warmth, whereas men score higher on measures of Assertiveness''(4). Even though ''[a]ssessed gender differences are small […]'' they are ''largely consistent with gender stereotypes'', ultimately stressing the fact that ''[...] those views appear to have a basis in the characteristics of individuals'' (4).

The quote presented in the beginning of this chapter already indicates the ambivalence of the very term 'stereotype'. Stereotypes are neither intrinsically true, nor false. How then, do stereotypes have such a high impact on cultures, constantly internally and externally defining and redefining minorities and majorities, races, sexes, age groups and social classes the same? And where do these stereotypes come from?

The very idea of a group mentality is the keyword in this context. In contrast to this idea of groups, Terracciano et al. Mention that classic notions of stereotypes considered their origin to be rooted in ''authoritarian or prejudiced personalities'' (6), a kind of old-fashioned, outdated definition from a 20th century point of view. Thus, the authors rather agree with an idea contemporary approaches have brought to light: Stereotypes do not seem to be produced by single entities, but are rather ''[…] the result of general cognitive processes'' (6). However, it has to be stressed in this context that not all groups are affected by stereotypes and racism. They are by no means ‘all the same’ and suffer to a varying degree from the phenomena discussed in this section.

In this context, Jessica Cundiff explains the vicious cycle of developing and intensifying stereotypes in her publication, ''Are stereotypes true?''. Giving an example of discrimination against women in terms of gender prejudices, she introduces readers to the terms ''Stereotype Threat'' and ''Stereotype Lift'', concepts that are deeply connected to the idea of stereotype production by groups. Cundiff starts off her article by quoting

Spencer, Steele and Quinn, who found that when

> […] a math test was described as showing no previous gender differences in performance, women performed as well as men. When the test did not include this description, men outperformed women, implying that the stereotype itself causes stereotypic [sic] behavior. (Cundiff)

Cundiff goes on by explaining that stereotypes themselves reinforce stereotypical behavior, by way of two psychological phenomena, namely the previously mentioned ''Threat'' and ''Lift''. According to the author, '' Stereotype threat occurs when someone feels threatened by the possibility of confirming a negative stereotype about their group (Steele in Cundiff)''. The very negative feeling associated with the thread then leads to a decreased performance, ''which in turn confirms the stereotype that the person was hoping to avoid'' (Cundiff).

Cundiff explains the second issue that reinforces stereotypical behavior, namely 'Stereotype Lift'. She states that studies have shown that a group experiences a boost in performance when being face with the 'fact' that another group tends to fare worse. In this context, she mentions a phenomenon intrinsically linked to 'Stereotype Lift', namely the idea of a ''Downward Social Comparison, a process whereby people elevate their self-esteem by comparing their group to a lower-status group […]'' (Cundiff), the basis for the lift in performance, or as she describes it with yet another example of male/female stereotypes, stating that:

> Men are able to boost their self-esteem and improve their math performance by comparing themselves to women, who are stereotypically believed to be worse at math than men. [...] However, when stereotypes are made irrelevant to the given test, men are no longer able to use this line of thinking to boost their self-esteem.

Cundiff ultimately highlights that exaggerated performance differences between two groups are highly based on a recurring cycle of stereotype threat and stereotype lift. Thus, a decrease of performance in one group and an increase of performance in the other group are the results of the 'collaboration' of both phenomena. The stress of stereotypical differences confirms the stereotype, allowing it to grow stronger and ultimately produce even cruder group difference.

This vicious circle of stereotypes eventually leads to the superiority of one group in a certain domain which scares off the other group from entering as its members view their efforts as futile thinking that they need to be somehow ''genetically wired'' to a certain skill or quality and will thus always be outperformed by the other group. Instead, they pursue success where their respective group is not negatively stereotyped (Cundiff).

How is all of this related to the topics of this thesis? The connection to seems obvious. Race and ethnicity are potentially expressed in the same circular pattern of stereotype lift and threat. Although 'internal' stereotypes (internal describing stereotypes within the same culture), such as 'men vs women' or 'old vs. young' are prevalent, 'external' stereotypes, directed from one race, ethnicity or culture towards another seem to be far more prominent parts of everyday life. Internal and external stereotypes affect members of groups as individuals, but also affect the ways in which they are depicted inside and outside of the group. In this context, John Lowe adds an important definition of ethnicity by quoting Wsevolod W. Isajiw, stating that

> Identification by others in turn usually stimulates self-identification and may condition new forms of social organization. Hence, ethnicity is a matter of a double boundary, a boundary from within, maintained by the socialization process, and a boundary from without established by the process of intergroup relations. (440)

The notion and the impact of stereotypes thus not only constructs, enhances and constantly reconstructs a psychological image of a group, it also has an impact of its physical depiction. But what exactly is a race or an ethnicity? Lowe quotes R. A. Schermerhorn's description of an ethnic group as

> […] a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic events defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic events are kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypal features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group. (Schermenhorst in Lowe 440)

Thus, the idea of groups seems to be especially important when talking about ethnicity and race. Different social ethnicities or races often make use of this very superficial notion of „groups" and tag themselves thus, even though there is no such thing as 'the Blacks', 'the Whites' or one single 'Black' or 'White' culture. However, Lowe stresses the fact that the act of determining an ethnic identity is not static. It is rather a dynamic process, constantly shifting and redefining the boundaries of the respective race, ethnicity or culture (440).

It is of course not only the race that undergoes a constant process of shifting notions and definitions. The depiction of different races and ethnicities, especially non-white groups constantly shifts. As this paper will show, the depiction of 'deviant' races in Disney movies is no exception from this rule. But what exactly did change?

1.2. Disney Animation: A brief overview

Although being a 'proper movie', an animated motion picture obviously follows other rules and principles than a 'regular' one. Animation offers freedom, but also limitations 'regular' movies do not have. Animated movies are –at least theoretically– not bound by the limitations of place and time, the animators' imagination being the only limit. Conveniently, 'Actors' can be added, removed and shaped to the liking of the creators. Physical qualities, such as hair, skin color, and voices can be replaced fast and easily.

Looking back at a rich tradition of animation, Disney has developed a certain style guide which most of the company's movies follow. In his paper ''Colour, Lines and Nudes: Teaching Disney's Animators'', Richard Neupert stresses in this context the fact that Disney animators of 'classic' Disney feature length films and even short cartoon clips had to undergo instructions at The Chounard Art School, a training he describes as ''[...]a rigorous training program for apprentices coupled with continuing art classes for all animators (even 'old-timers')'' (Neupert 77). The supervision of instructor Donald W. Graham, eventually lead to a shift that tends to regard him as a driving force in ''[…] reinforcing and systematising the 'look' of Disney animation at a time when the cartoons were growing from eight-minute shorts to eighty-minute features (by 138 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs)'' (77). In order to achieve innovation, ''[…] Graham conducted 'action analysis' of motion with moviolas of animated footage, but also by teaching animators how to evaluate live action […]'', styles that should eventually distinguish Disney from competing Studios such as Warner Bros, or as Neupert phrases it:

> One factor often referred to in discussions of Disney Studio's historic success has been their obsession with 'realistic' detail in their cartoons. Moreover, the popular press regularly pointed out that

> Disney did not just make cartoons, they made art, thereby transforming animation into a higher expressive form. Early praise of Disney cartoons centred on their being closer to 'art' than cartoons by Warner's or other animators, partly because of Disney's' work on the level of sheer craftsmanship' (77).

According to Neupert, Graham's classes had the intention to enhance the animators' ''[…] familiarity with conventional art instruction and to provide acknowledge of human and animal motion, behavioural habits and body structures'' . Thus, Graham himself tried to find out how animation could create ''realistic illusions'' (77) a term that seems quite paradoxical by the very name of the term. However, Neupert gives the simple the example of an animated egg: Applying ''realistic illusion'' to the drawing and giving the object a three-dimensional shape makes it easier for the audience to personify the egg by identifying qualities such as weight, motion and color (79). Graham's instruction is thus very much focused on aspects such as a good color composition and the correct application of moving lines and areas, which must change and modify during any action (80).

Characters are of course the most important 'shapes' in this context. Neupert states that Graham concentrates his teachings on the ''[…] the mechanics of real movement'' that have to be ''[…] understood before any distortion can be added to heighten animated effects'' (81). Graham made use of nude models in order to demonstrate different aspects of movement and counter-movement, eventually leading to a better understanding of motion and proportions of shapes and bodies (84).

In this context, not only shape but color, seemingly the most important aspect of animation, be it in black-and-white or technicolor helps defining the character, yet more importantly it helps defining space and time in animation. While for Disney, color helps to distinguish their final product from competitors, enhancing the feeling that animation really

came to life, for Graham the use of color means using the potential of animation completely. Both notions eventually reinforce and spread the ''[…] already established image of Disney's mythical drive towards perfection'' (80).

It is this 'perfection' that seems to be a leitmotif in Disney's animation and corporate identity itself, a tendency that was born over 70 years ago that has endured the ages and extended its impact into 21st century Disney animation. Disney uses its in-house perfection not only as a marketing tool but also to define its impact on culture. Quite a few scholarly papers stress how classic Disney cartoons and distinctively, the person Walt Disney himself stressed the notion that they wanted to depict things realistically and naturally. Some authors even go so far as to explicitly praise Walt Disney as a ''Master of Laughter and Learning'', spreading the good word of an animated, aesthetic truth that depicted the 'real world', i.e. nature adequately in Disney cartoons (see also Izard)

On the other hand, authors such as Lutts criticize Disney for its unrealistic, over-romantic and kitschy depiction of the real world. In his paper ''The Trouble with Bambi: Walt Disney's Bambi and the American Vision of Nature'', the author uses Bambi (1942) as an example to prove how Disney did not pay attention to the themes and motifs of the foundation of their movie, namely the 1923 Austrian novel Bambi eine Lebensgeschichte aus dem Walde (Bambi, a Life in the Woods). In a nutshell, Lutts describes in his paper how Disney depicts an Americanized nature, presenting overly cute animals with unrealistic proportions, a filtered truth of unnatural animals that live within a softened, mellow Disney world.

In his work “Fundamentals of Animation” Paul Wells provides tips to transform animated characters actors. A desire to create a link between 'real' movies seems somewhat hinted in this desire. As his main source, Wells uses input by Ed Hooks, one of the ''leading acting practitioners in

the American animation'' and author of the book Acting for Animators (79). It is striking that the qualities of impactful animation have a lot in common with the qualities actors need when transferring emotions.

According to Hooks, thinking leads to conclusions while emotions lead to acts. He goes on by stressing the fact that he audience recognizes emotions, not thoughts (79). In this context, animated characters have the advantage that the animator can literally impose any emotion on them. However, emotions in animations movies are often not displayed as subtly as in films featuring real actors. Animators thus often resort to traditional techniques of expressing emotions. Classic examples for this are eyes that pop out of characters heads or lower jaw that literally drops to the respective character's knees, functioning as an exaggerated visual representation surprise.

Wells continues his idea of an ideal animation by stating that characters become more vivid when they are having problems. In this context, gestures do not necessarily have to underline the spoken word, but rather function as means to reflect an ''inner truth''. According to Wells and Hooks, all thoughts of a character have to be animated: the more precise the thoughts, the better the results. (79) Animated characters not only express their feelings by using gestures and facial expressions, but often by deviant, caricature-like exaggerations.

In addition to the often bizarre physical transformations, emotions in Disney, as well as in many other animated movies, follow a classic feature that was born in the age of classic cartoons and comics - expressing emotions via external, visual representations. Examples of this are often visible around the character's head. Emotions like love are represented by little flying hearts or little cupids, rage and anger by thunder clouds that surround the 'actor's' head, or even cruder representations e.g. an angry character's head turns into a piping burning hot teakettle.

Disney often mixes the classic styles mentioned before with more 'realistic' representations of emotions, often within the same movie, or even within the same roles. Aladdin, as this paper will show is one exemplary film in this context, as the film features 'realistic' characters, such as Aladdin himself, who 'acts' in a classic way, using gestures and mimic, while at the same time expressing emotions by the aforementioned bizarre, 'unrealistic' means of visualization, while the Genie presented in the movie is the complete opposite: he represents a classic cartoon character that uses classic means of acting as a variety.

Wells eventually concludes his list by mentioning Hook's idea that a character should never be idle. He stresses the fact that an act is played to achieve a certain goal while overcoming some kind of obstacle. As in many modern and contemporary texts, a scene in an animated movie starts in the middle, not in the beginning.

Only when the story and the storyboard are done should animators actually start bringing their characters to life - animate them. However, an animated movie shares the qualities of a 'regular' movie in regards to tension. Wells ultimately states that a sequence or a scene without a conflict or tension has to be adjusted (79).

In conclusion, animated motion pictures are -generally spoken- not so different from movies featuring real actors in terms of general technique. An animated picture has directors, cameramen and -women and sound engineers who put their efforts into the film, eventually shaping the movie as a whole, just as in any feature-length Hollywood movie.

However, the fact that animation features character performers rather than actors seems to distinguish the genre from its 'role model'. Yet, that Hollywood superstars and other contemporary celebrities have frequently dubbed Disney characters from the very start of Disney animation e.g. Robin Williams, Jeremy Irons or Whoopi Goldberg, blurs

this notion a bit. Disney's animated movies play with the history of animation and their own history, looking back at classic techniques of cartoon making, featured in classic Disney cartoons, such as the Silly Symphonies. Sometimes Disney characters of past movies even have cameos in another movie, or they are even explicitly being referred to.

Even though animated settings and characters become gradually independent during the making of an animated picture, one of their most important qualities seems to be the aforementioned 'relative absolute' freedom they offer to their makers in regards to their appearance. In the context of race and ethnicity, this concept is of crucial importance. Disney, still subtly expressing that a 'realistic' depiction of the real world, must thus aim at depict race and ethnicity 'properly'.

2. Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's Animated Movies

2.1. Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's *Aladdin* (1992)

> When American children hear the word "Arab" what is the first thing that comes to mind? Perhaps the imagery of Disney's Arabian Nights' fantasy film Aladdin […] (Karaman and Wingfield)

The image of 'Arabs' seems to be somewhat ambivalent and problematic right from the start. The very term 'Arab' describes an ethnic community originally coming from North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The stereotypical depiction of 'Arabs' in the media seems to be a somewhat static image of a turban-wearing, bearded and brown-skinned man, often shown in a negative light. In this context, Bushra Karaman and Marvin Wingfield state in their article ''Arab Stereotypes and American

Educators'', that

> Comic books frequently have Arab villains as a gratuitous element in their story line: Tarzan battles with an Arab chieftain who kidnaps Jane, Superman foils Arab terrorists hijacking a U.S. nuclear carrier, and the Fantastic Four combat a hideous oil sheikh [sic] supervillain.

According to the authors, additional negative images of Arabs are featured in various Hollywood movies e.g. Back to the Future and Raiders of the Lost Ark as well as 'evil' Arabs in computer games (Karaman and Wingfield). This observation eventually leads the authors to confirm the quote of Lebanese Median analyst Jack Shaheen, who points out that ''[...] there is never an Arab hero for kids to cheer.'' In this context, a lack of ''positive ethnic images'' increases the damage of stereotypes, since – as Shaheen has observed– Arabs are hardly ever depicted and seen as ''ordinary people, practicing law, driving taxis, singing lullabies or healing the sick” (Karaman and Wingfield).

But how exactly are 'Arabs' depicted in *Aladdin*? Taking a look at the origin of Disney's adaptation seems crucial at this point. Comparing Disney's *Aladdin* to the classic tale, or in this case, the English Translation by Lang seems to be necessary to a certain extent. However, as this analysis considers the movie a piece of art on its own looking at aspects such as fidelity in connection to the original are unnecessary. I will therefore not try to point out how 'true' or 'untrue' the adaptation is to the original.

Although Karaman and Wingfield consider Disney's *Aladdin* ''[...] in many ways [...] charming [and] artistically impressive'' and praise the fact that it is one of the few American films featuring an Arab hero – taking a closer look at the movie ''[...]reveals some disturbing features'', according to the authors. In addition to the fact that *Aladdin* depicts the first Arab hero in Disney history, Dorothy Hurley points out that the tale

distinguishes itself from other classic Disney fairytale adaptations by means of origin. Aladdin is one of the few Disney adaptations that are not based on a corpus of Western texts, as the tale was brought to the Western Wold, where they were first translated from Arabic into French by Antoine Galland and eventually into other European languages (Hurley 224)

Disney's depiction of the Orient starts off by presenting the audience a frame that prominently features the title and the very name of the film's protagonist, namely *Aladdin.* Blue smoke wafts through the frame, eventually turning into golden letters, set in a seemingly exotic font. The warm gold tone of the title is embedded within a red title screen, consisting of sparkling flames in front of a pitch black background. The very first screen itself triggers the notion of mystery and coolness, represented by the blue of the smoke that is contrasted by the golden letters and the black/reddish tones of the background that embody luxury, warmth and exoticism.

The notion that we are in fact watching something 'Arabian' is stressed by the musical score in the introductory scenes of the movie – prominently visible in the frames presented on this page[1]. The title *Aladdin* itself turns into an eddy of sand, mixing with the dunes of a

1 All stills/screenshots presented in this paper were taken by the author of this paper (c) The Walt Disney Company

dessert, the very first location presented in the movie. Instruments of war and tension, such as drums and cymbals are contrasted to instruments of relaxation and spirituality such as gongs and violins, introducing and underlining the ever-present ambivalence of Arabia, a leitmotif in the context of racial and ethnic depiction that is, as it will turn out, realized by different channels and techniques in the movie.

The occasional description and interpretation of the music used in the movies that are discussed in this paper serves a crucial function in the reading and interpretation of the films and their respective scenes. It has to be remarked at this point that, without a background of a discipline such as musicology, the partial analysis of the movie's scores has to be adapted for this thesis. Instead of delivering a musicological analysis (featuring aspects such as rhythm or tempo) the description of music throughout this paper is rather intended to stress the respective moods that are transferred by the scores and lyrics.

As the title screen eventually transforms into the main setting of *Aladdin's* plot. A blurry image of drifting sand dunes introduces the audience to a seemingly endless desert, a lifeless hostile environment only populated by rocks; sands drenched in the orange-red of a sundown. The introduction of the movie is accompanied by the first song featured in the film, *Arabian* Nights. As the scene continues, the viewers are introduced to the actual singer of the song, a traveling merchant, slowly but steadily riding a camel through the endless, sun drenched desert.

Analyzing selected stills of the aforementioned introduction of the film not only helps to grasp the effects the introduction transfers by the animation itself, but also by means of color. *Aladdin's* introduction clearly transfers two main themes, namely exoticism and mysticism, displayed not only by the music and the animation, but simply by means of the main colors dominant in the scenes.

The introduction sequence and its color coding is just one example

of the introducing images, moods and ideas that are -in Western culture- immediately associated with the tag *Arabian.* Depicting a turban-wearing person riding a camel through the desert sets the general tone for the rest of the movie and immediately evokes further expectations in the audience at the same time. While the traveling merchant slowly rocks back and forth on the back of his mount, he casts a large shadow that is contrasted to the yellow-orange of the sands, intensifying the notion of heat and dryness.

The introduction of the movie clearly aims at transferring motifs such as heat the mere setting of the movie, namely the dessert, the frame immediately following the sequence distinguishes itself from the previous scenes by not only highlighting the transition from day to night, but also a transformation of the channeled mood. His way eventually leads the traveler into a huge Arabic city, over-topped by a gigantic white palace that is crowned by golden domes. The city is presented in the colors of the sundown, pink, blue, violet and purple are the dominant colors in the scene. The viewer does not know the real colors of the buildings he is encountering, everything is behind a mysterious, cool veil of darkness.

As the introductory sequence continues, the camera pans into the nighttime streets of the city that serves as the main setting for the plot. Agrabah is a major city and also the residence of a sultanate whose location, political function and even name are never mentioned in the film.

Except for the dominant palace in the background of the city, the countless buildings within the city, that reminds the viewer of the Arabic cities of the medieval age, seem to be rather unimpressive. From an animator's perspective, the limited screen time of the buildings simply does not make it necessary to present them fully detailed. Yet no structure presented in the scene looks like another. Every building distinguishes itself from the rest by little details that not only give the illusion of a lively, individual environment, but also enhance the idea of an

Arabic, Oriental setting. The streets of *Agrabah* are covered by little market stalls, jars, carpets and various wondrous items. Many buildings use colorful rugs as canopies. The windows and entrances of the buildings are either simple rectangular mouths or elaborate colorful gables, featuring floral shapes and patterns that of wealth, luxury and exoticism, while at the same time, resemble almost arcane and magical aspects of the "*Orient".*

Agrabah is of course not a city without people. Turban-wearing, bearded men are roaming the streets, accompanied by women in veils; a fakir-like fire breather is standing in the streets beneath a sign that displays -to Western eyes- incomprehensible, mysterious, seemingly Arabic writings. As the artist demonstrates his skills, the scene reaches a small climax. As the man breathes flames, puffs of smoke cover the screen, eventually leading us back to the traveling merchant who has reached his destination and the end of his song.

Taking a closer look at the song *Arabian Nights* seems to be necessary at this point of the analysis. Taking a look at the lyric not only reveals the song's relevance in the context of atmosphere, but also the controversy the song caused after *Aladdin* hit the big screens:

Arabian Nights:

Oh I come from a land,[2]
From a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam
Where it's flat and immense
And the heat is intense
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home

When the wind's from the east
And the sun's from the west
And the sand in the glass is right

Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam
Where they cut off your ear
If they don't like your face
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home
(Original first verse (1992-93), retrieved from nytimes.com)

2 All song lyrics and dialogues of the movies discussed in this paper have either been copied from the original DVD subtitles or transcribed by the author of this thesis

Come on down, stop on by,
Hop a carpet and fly
To another Arabian night

Arabian nights
Like Arabian days
More often than not
Are hotter than hot
In a lot of good ways

Arabian nights
'Neath Arabian moons
A fool off his guard
Could fall and fall hard
Out there on the dunes
(Aladdin)

Especially the first line of the song that was later altered by Disney has caught for much controversy. Karaman and Wingfield however see the ''disturbing'' features in their reading of *Aladdin* confirmed, by saying that the song ''[…] immediately characterizes the Arab world as alien, exotic, and *other,* complaining that the introduction of the movie, including *Arabian Nights* stressed the ''[…] tired stereotype of the Arab world as a place of deserts and camels, of arbitrary cruelty and barbarism''.

Taking a look at the lyrics and the lexical fields reveals some of the roots of the uproar the song has caused. *Arabian Nights* enhances the introduction of *Aladdin* as a whole and immediately triggers emotions and notions that are linked tightly to Euro-American ideas of the Orient. The song uses specific, prototypical images that are enhanced by the melody and choice of instruments used in *Arabian Nights*.

Creating images of a ''faraway land'', ''caravans'' and ''camels'' in a ''flat'' and ''immense'' environment where ''heat wind, sun, sand and dunes'' are predominant factors are clearly elements of Orientalism, the Western, white idea of a mysterious, yet somewhat inferior Orient. The ever present mystery that was introduced in the very first sequence of

Aladdin is of course also present in *Arabian Nights*. ''Flying carpets'' are implicit allusions to the location and cultural notions -and stereotypes- the movie aims to transfer, while ''Arabian nights'' and ''Arabian moons'' wear the alleged Oriental tag in their very name. The question is, what is so specifically Arabian for *Aladdin* or Disney itself? A question that cannot be answered without taking a look at the various aspects of Arabia that are featured in *Aladdin*.

As the original lyrics of the song show, the Disney Company originally meant to add yet another aspect of the Disney image of Arabia to the song and thus, the movie itself, namely *danger*. The line'' Where they cut off your ear//If they don't like your face // It's barbaric, but hey, it's home'' (*Aladdin*) was eventually cut out of later releases of the movie, and of course the home video and DVD versions. The New York Times gives in this context a compacted overview of how some of the reactions to the original lyrics were:

> The Walt Disney Company has said it will alter the lyrics of a song in the Oscar-winning animated feature "Aladdin," but Arab-Americans who had called for the change, saying the movie was racist, criticized the studio for not going far enough.
>
> Changes in the song were announced Friday after Disney received permission from the estate of the lyricist, Howard Ashman, and from his collaborator, Alan Menken.
>
> Dick Cook, the Disney president for distribution, said the lyrics had been changed after meetings with members of the American- Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.
>
> The fourth and fifth lines were replaced with lyrics that describe the desert climate and geography.
>
> But the president of the anti-discrimination committee, Albert Mokhiber, said the group was still angry because Disney had not changed the word "barbaric."
>
> "It was something we did because we wanted to do it," he said. "In no way would we ever do anything that would be insensitive to anyone." (nytimes.com)

Contrasting the words and ideas ''barbaric'' and ''home'' enhances the ever-present ambiguity of Disney's Arabia, discussed earlier in this chapter. Seemingly contrary terms are linked together, feelings of discomfort and tension, expressed by ''barbaric'' are mingled with the notion of a comfortable and relaxed home. Selling most of their products in Western markets, the Disney company aims at a mainly white target audience, who considers the Orient or Arabia with the unknown, or the more appropriate German term *unheimlich*, since it is literally not something they would consider their idea of a home. Although fascinating, a certain danger is omnipresent in the world of *Aladdin*. The ''heat'' described in the lyrics of the song presented not only describe the temperature, but also excitement. Although the song explicitly refers to this as ''In a lot of good ways'' (*Aladdin*), the description can also be understood in a more negative sense, namely a depiction of disturbance, fear and crime, suddenly turning the concept of exoticism into something disturbingly dark and evil.

As a reaction to the song, Leila Gorchev, spokeswoman of the American-Arab Anti-Anti-Discrimination Committee, who wrote to studio chief Jeffrey Katzenberg, asking Disney to replace a lyric from the movie's opening song described the bone of contention as follows: ''This [*Aladdin*] is a family movie, yet I would not call those lyrics suitable for children- […] It sets the tone for the whole movie, the idea that Arabs are somehow barbaric and brutal.'' (Hajari and Hardy)

Obviously, the lyrics of *Arabian Night*'s original first line alluded to ancient Islamic laws that -in a simplified version- described cutting off limbs or other parts of the body as a punishment for crimes e.g. cutting off a hand for theft etc – practices that can also be found in ancient Jewish or Christian traditions and their respective holy scriptures. Another scene in the movie is linked to this mean of punishment, namely when Princess

Jasmine is in danger having her hand chopped off by an angry merchant for 'stealing' an apple in order to feed a hungry child. Hurley considers this very scene ''[o]ne of the clearest indicators of the privileging of Western or White culture'' in *Aladdin* and points out the '' […] the noticeable absence of positive representations of Eastern or Arabian cultural currency'' (27). For Hurley, the incident represents ''[…] this Arabian society […] as being […] unjust and unfair'' (227).

However, Hurley's observation seems questionable, as one single, minor character does by no means represent the Arabian society depicted in *Aladdin* as a whole. Even though the scene is very impressive and prominent, the negative images of the 'Arabic' characters face their positive counterparts all within the same culture. All heroes and villains of the movies are of the same race and ethnicity, Hurley's argument is thus invalid, as it can be turned around, as the movie also stresses positive aspects of ''this Arabian society'' by the positive actions of *Aladdin's* heroes and heroines.

However, an overall negative reception of Arabic audiences are a prominent issue of *Aladdin's* aftermath. Hajari and Hardy mention in this context, that co-songwriter Alan Menken was apparently ''[…] concerned enough about the lyric to have written and recorded an alternate line'' prior to the release of the movie. Producer and director John Musker even explicitly admitted that ''We thought we could get nailed on this'' (Musker in Hajari and Hardy).

Even though they were changed, *Arabian Nights* does not fully let go of motifs of danger, since ''A fool off his guard, could fall and fall hard'' (*Aladdin*), an implicit expression that transfers an idea of the bare necessity of caution, when traveling the exotic place that is the setting of *Aladdin*.

The audience is eventually explicitly introduced to the city of

Agrabah and the whole Orient itself by a single line. Breaking the fourth wall, the traveling merchant addresses the viewers with: ''Salaam and good evening to you, worthy friend'' (*Aladdin*). Something that was only during the song suddenly becomes evident when hearing this greeting: The merchant's speech features a foreign, non-standard Accent of American English including the Arabic greeting *Salaam*, which has the lexical meaning of the English word *peace.*

Realizing that Arabic is indeed the native languages of the people living in Agrabah does by no means pin the location of city to a certain area. Featuring a language spoken by more than 400 million people of different descents, nationalities and ethnicities in an area that spans from the Middle East to North Africa, *Aladdin* remains mysterious about Agrabah's position. The film does not seem to be set in specific 'real country' although later scenes explicitly depict landmarks of the 'real world' The architecture, clothing and diction of the people indicates that the time setting of the movie is vaguely around the 13th or 14th century of the 'real world'. Featuring landmarks such as the pyramids, Greek temples and even a Chinese pagoda, the movie links itself and its setting to the real world, without revealing too much. One of the few additional hints that sets the movie into the 'Orient' or 'Arabia' of the real world is a merchant, who sells ''Oranges from Jaffa'' (*Aladdin)*.

The ambiguous setting of the movie serves two distinctive functions. By not clearly defining the location of the setting, *Aladdin* does neither openly praise, nor offend any of the groups it is supposed to depict. Vagueness, ambiguity and generalizations seem to be the keywords in Disney's depiction of 'Arabia'. In contrast to this observation, Hurley mentions the fact that the original Arabian tale ''[...] takes place primarily in China with a short segment in Africa'' (224), in contrast to the movie, where a depiction of characters without any skin-color would be of course, possible, yet not very visually appealing, in the classic tale '' [n]one of the

major characters is described in relation to skin color'' (224).

Coming back to the appearance of the merchant and naturally, his skin-color, reveal that his main features clearly identify the man as an 'Arab', even though his features are somewhat blurred by the dark blue of the 'Arabian Night': He wears a huge turban and a kaftan, has a big nose, brownish skin an a little black goatee. While the merchant's appearance, accent and diction clearly distinguish him from the norm – in this case Western whiteness – the monologue which serves as a little introductory speech for the audience not only underlines the comedic aspects of *Aladdin*, but also serve as a sudden link of 'Arabia' to the West:

> Welcome to Agrabah. City of mystery. Of enchantment. And the finest merchandise this side of the river Jordan. On Sale today. Come on down. Look at this. Combination hookah and coffee maker. Also makes julienne fries. (*Aladdin*)

Not only does this introduction partially characterize the merchant as a cunning salesman, it also gives a first hint of one of the many mixes of American and Arabic culture, featured in the movie. He uses typical terms from American commerce, especially TV-Commercials, or more precisely, the infamous American Infomercials, mingled with the boldness characteristics of a man who is used to sell items on a bazaar or in the streets. Phrases, such as ''On Sale'' and ''[…] also makes julienne fries'' and the fact that the merchant is in fact selling selling ''Dead Sea Tupperware'' (*Aladdin*), are thus not only anachronisms, meant to link the modern, mainly Western, audience to the movie and its setting, but also highlight cultural mix, a factor that is one of *Aladdin's* themes, a factor that becomes especially evident when taking a look at one of the movie's protagonists that will be discussed shortly, namely the Genie.

The merchant eventually initiates the main story, after presenting the audience with various products and eventually haggling and teasing them with a mysterious lamp that is obviously not ''ordinary'' (*Aladdin*).

Pouring glowing powder from the lamp into his hands and throwing it into the starless sky, starts off *Aladdin's* main plot and yet again serves an underlining function. It is not only Arabia itself that is magic, but the people themselves are able to perform mysterious wonders of varying degrees as well, as proved by the unremarkable, almost annoying, yet mysterious merchant.

The Scene immediately following the frame narrative introduces the audience not to the hero, but the villain of the movie and vizier of the Sultan of Agrabah, Jafar. His dark skin and his black, fine curly beard immediately link him to the other characters presented so far in *Aladdin,* marking him as Arabian. Hurley mentions in her reading of Jafar, that

> Although all the characters have tan or olive skin, the usual coding of white for good and black for evil is still evidenced in the film. For example, the evil Javar [sic], a deceitful advisor of the Sultan and enemy of Aladdin, is introduced as ''a dark man [who] awaits a dark purpose." He is dressed in black throughout the film, rides a black horse, and even his parrot (which changes colors in the film) is initially shown as black to indicate his badness. The "Cave of Wonders," home of the magic lamp, is guarded by a black panther Jasmine [*Aladdin's* Arabic princess] opens a white gate and several white birds fly toward the sky; this is clearly a good omen and a sign of Jasmine's goodness.(226)

Besides mixing up some facts of the movie (The vizier's name is neither spelled Javar, nor does his parrot change colors and the cave of wonders is guarded by a tiger) Hurley wrongly imposes a reading on the style of the movie, where it is simply out of place. As she correctly mentions the use of color coding, she implicitly links her finding to the depiction of race at the same time. Applying color theory reveals, that the

use of colors is not linked to any ethnicity, as even cultures with 'dark' complexions –of course with some exceptions– frequently use colors to symbolize concepts such as *mystery* and *evil* with darker colors, while applying lighter colors to *purity* and the *good*.

Jafar's color code changes towards the end of the movie, as he turns –drunk with power– into a powerful wizard, a black and red cobra and eventually into an evil red genie, a crass contrast to the cool blue of the 'good Genie' that will be introduced later in this chapter. All of these transformations and images not only serve the purpose of depicting danger explicitly – they are also concepts and symbols negatively connoted in Euro-centric cultures, e.g. the evil wizard or the poisonous snake, while not necessarily having a negative image in Eastern cultures, e.g. the wise man or the cobra as a symbol of wisdom or royalty.

Jafar is, obviously not a stranger. Although his appearance in terms of dressing distinguish him from the other characters, his typical Arabic name and appearance make clear that he is of Oriental origin himself. His voice however, proves to the audience otherwise. In contrast to all 'Arabic-English' phrases spoken before, Jafar presents himself with a distinctive, almost aristocratic British accent.

While the viziers way of speaking clearly sets him apart from the

rest of the characters in *Aladdin* -no other character speaks with a British accent-, his race and even the whole setting of the movie in *Aladdin,* Jafar steps into a rich tradition of Disney villains who share the very same linguistic feature. No matter what setting, time period or nationality, many of Disney's 'evil' characters speak British English. Jafar's deviant accent and diction serve as an an alienating function. It most prominently immediately identifies him as 'evil' for older Disney 'veterans', yet also stresses his 'otherness' for the biggest of Disney's target audiences, namely the children.

Voices, i.e. voice actors and diction play an important role in any Disney movie, yet in the context of race, they become even more crucial parts of a character's performance and features of the figures direct characterization. When Jafar eventually meets the apparent key to the Cave of Wonders, it becomes obvious that not only aspects of good and evil are represented by different ways of voice acting. Jafar's accomplice, some kind of robber or bandit, a nameless, chubby and small man with a husky voice, talks with a thick 'Arabian' accent that features a very prominent 'rolling' r-sound. The man states that he had to ''[…] slit a few throats'' (*Aladdin*) to obtain the key to the cave, the second piece of a mysterious golden Scarab, an item that functions as an explicit link to Egyptian mythology.

As the man is awed by the sight of the Cave of Wonders, the gigantic head of a tiger, formed by the magic of the scarab from the dunes of the desert, he mutters ''By Allah'' (*Aladdin*) and thus openly establishes yet another link to 'Arabian' culture, namely religion. The Disney is especially careful about the explicit implementation of belief in any form in any of their products. In *Aladdin* the reference to *Allah* is the only hint that the viewers are in fact facing characters that might be Muslims, yet this call on God is the only aspect of Islam that is notable in the movie. Agrabah's mosques are only hinted by their accompanying minarets, often

blurred within the other buildings of the city. While the spiritual building is merged into the profanity of the city, the name of *Allah* is mixed within profane speech. *Allah* thus only serves as a expedient to create a certain 'Oriental', 'Arabic' atmosphere, having no more lexical or cultural meaning than the English exclamation 'Oh my God' in any other Disney movie.

Coming back to the importance of voices, i.e. voice actors, it seems obvious that – maybe especially for animated characters– diction and explicit, seemingly local expressions or slang terms play an important role in the context of race, as they become crucial parts of a character's performance and direct features characterization. As in any Disney movie, the animated characters are to a certain extent inspired by the person who voices them. At the same time, the voice actor tries to adjust to the physical appearance of the character, thus creating a relationship of interdependency that eventually leads to the end result.

The movie's villain, Jafar, is additionally accompanied by his very own sidekick, the very parrot already mentioned before, namely the 'evil' comic relief of the movie. Iago, an anthropomorphic parrot usually sits on the vizier's shoulder and comments what is going on, yet often actively enters the action of the story by scheming and plotting against the movie's hero, Aladdin and his companions.

As in many animation films, Disney distinguishes between animals who serve as – often speaking- characters and those who are mere extras and part of the set. While Iago, as a parrot, is able to speak, Abu, Aladdin's monkey sidekick, is in contrast only able to utter typical monkey screams, mixed with some gibberish words.

While Iago is -from a human point of view- naked, Abu's appearance is quite different. The little monkey not only wears a west, but also a little fez, embroidered with colorful patterns and ornaments, items that not only enhance his comedic function, but also stress the fact that he is an 'Arabian' animal, linked to the setting and the culture. Both animals, Abu

and Iago, do not only have fitting, common Arabic names, they are furthermore stereotypical animals that represent the Orient and thus, not only serves as means to enhance the overall Arabic-Oriental atmosphere of the movie, but also link the audience to the culture they represent in a comedic manner. The way this is achieved is again realized by a mix of cultures. While both animals are clearly not 'Western' their behavior and humor often is. Abu often behaves in the aforementioned ways of a typical 1920s classic cartoon character, while Iago is not only voiced by American stand-up comedian comedian Gilbert Gottfried, he also explicitly utters –often foul-mouthed– American slang terms, such as ''Jeez, where'd you dig this bozo up'' (*Aladdin*), when reviewing the qualities of Jafar's shifty accomplice, the robber his master sends into the Cave of Wonders.

Eventually, talking about race in *Aladdin* is impossible without taking a closer look at the movie's protagonists, namely Aladdin, Jasmine and the Genie. Taking a look at the heroic lovers, Aladdin and Jasmine, Hurley finds that

> […] black and white are used in uncharacteristic ways [...]. Both Aladdin and Jasmine have black hair. Aside from indicating their Arab identity, blackness in this instance is also associated with the exotic (non-European-ness) [sic]. In fact, Jasmine physically could very easily be an "exotic" version of a Barbie doll, with her cinched waist, voluptuous bosom, long hair, and flawless features. (226)

Hurley misses out on an important aspect of *Aladdin's* heroine: Jasmine cannot be analyzed in isolation. Her physical qualities, giving her the shape of an idealized 'sexy' Western beauty could rather be criticized in terms of sexism than race. Jasmine simply reflects the ever-same Disney princess that has simply been transferred to another location and time. Perfection is a crucial aspect of *The Disney Princess*, as it is not only a link to the maxim of perfection that the Walt Disney Company aims to embody in its characters; Jasmine also serves as a link to other female

Disney protagonists whose commercial and cultural impact seem to satisfy a certain demand Disney tries to satisfy by presenting their princesses the way they do. Jasmine is not only interesting in terms of race, but also of gender, as she is dominated by her father who tries to force her into marriage, as the law requires her to ''[...] marry a prince by her next birthday'' (*Aladdin*). It is unclear, whether it is patriarchy, tradition or religion – or a mix of all of these aspects– that force Jasmine into to becoming an unwanted bride, living a life in the golden cage of the sultan's palace. The princess' father only comments on her complaints by simply stating that she has to follow 'the law' (*Aladdin*).

Coming back to the depiction of the protagonists, Hurley's point of view partially affirm Karaman and Wingfield's findings who point out in this context that

> The film‘s light-skinned lead characters, Aladdin and Jasmine, have Anglicized features and Anglo-American accents. This is in contrast to the other characters who are dark-skinned, swarthy and villainous-cruel palace guards or greedy merchants with Arabic accents and grotesque facial features.

Hurley, Karaman and Wingfield often seem to make use of

superficial generalizations that serve their arguments, instead of actually taking a look at the movie. It is by all means true that men in *Aladdin* are depicted as thieves, merchants or scimitar-wielding palace guards, while women are depicted as seductive belly dancers –an aspect of the movie Hurley immediately sees as a depiction of the moral quality of the society […] reflected in the appearance of the scantily-clad dancing women'' (227)– or concubines, ugly crones behind burqas and veils. Yet all miss an important aspect, especially when trying to analyze *Aladdin's* side-characters. Besides depicting those exaggerated figures, *Aladdin* also implicitly features 'regular' characters, children, fathers and mothers and people going on with their everyday life, often so morally that the word *kitsch* seems inevitable.

Coming back to the protagonists, Aladdin himself follows the movie's prominent theme of cultural mix that has already been discussed in this chapter. Wearing a fez, no shirt and white bloomers clearly mark him as 'Arabian' and peculiarly link him and his sidekick monkey Abu, who is wearing the very same garment. Besides his –somewhat impractical, almost caricature– look. His appearance is complemented by his teenage attitude and his voice that sounds more like an American teenager than an Arabian street rat.

Aladdin is often referred to as ''Al'' in the movie, especially by the Genie of the lamp. While Hurley reads this as […] superimposing a Euro-American cultural practice that renders the character ridiculous as an Arab (227), it serves a completely different function, namely to familiarize the exotic character to the audience. Calling Aladdin ''Al'', thus not only enhancing his 'Western' aspects, but additionally makes the character even more sympathetic. The fact that Aladdin disguises himself as a prince with the name ''Ali Ababwa'' only stresses this notion, as the new name not only serves as a cloak but also a tool that enhances aspects of 'strangeness' or 'the other'.

The initiator of all of these processes, namely the Genie, is the ultimate cultural mix of *Aladdin*. Voiced by Robin Williams, the character is depicted –at least superficially– as a strangely shaped blue imp, shackled by golden handcuffs and wearing a curled black goatee, golden earrings and a braid. Superficially being clearly 'Oriental' and exotic, the character of the Genie is that of an American comedian –no wonder, considering the person who voices the character. From the very first introduction of the character, the audience clearly hears Robin Williams speaking through the character without any trace of an 'Arabian' accent. Western pop culture, including classic cartoons, link the Genie to the West. The ghost of the lamp explicitly refers to people and items of the West i.e. transforms into Arnold Schwarzenegger of one of the Marx Brothers, frequently using anachronistic items of mass production and comedy, such as rubber duckies or even Disney merchandise serving as yet another link of the Orient and the Occident.

2.2. Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995)

> Pocahontas was a story that appealed to us because it was basically a story about people getting along together in the world. Even though their cultures are very, very different, they have to live on the same land, and that seemed like an enormously appropriate kind of story to tell and one applicable to lots of places in the world today. (Roy Disney in Edwards 147)

Roy Disney's simplified version of Pocahonta's plot already gives a hint pointing towards the main themes of the movie. ''Getting along'' – even though by force– and cultural 'exchange' and mix are only two of the main issues of Disney's multicultural depiction of 'Indians'. In her essay The United Colors of ''Pocahontas'' Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's Multiculturalism, Leigh H. Edwards stresses the role of *Pocahontas* as an American myth and argues that

> The Walt Disney Company's animated film *Pocahontas* (1995) is the newest and and most widely-circulated version of America's Ur-miscegenation story. Pocahontas, America's "Indian Princess," has appeared in countless narratives over the past four centuries as the native heroine who not only welcomed and aided English colonization of Virginia, but who also married and had a child with an English settler, John Rolfe, and assimilated to English culture: the first Indian baptized a Christian. Her life has become what scholar Bernard W. Sheehan calls "the great archetype of Indian-white conjugal union" (175).4 In the early seventeenth-century, English writers celebrated her as supposed proof of the success of England's "civilizing" colonial culture, she has come to represent a native protectress of European men; her famous supposed rescue of Captain John Smith has become a rescue of America, instantiated as a central heroic act that consecrated the colonial project and brought a new nation into being.Numerous romanticized retellings of Smith's original narrative, particularly beginning in the nineteenth century, have constructed a Pocahontas who justifies America's imperial Manifest Destiny enterprise and

> symbolically expiates America's guilt about the war upon Native peoples and the continuing attenuation of Native cultures. That over two million Americans now claim, impossibly, to be descendants of Pocahontas suggests the degree to which the mythic construction of Pocahontas as America's Indian Princess and in some senses, the "mother of America," has lasting cultural power. (Edwards 147-148)

The filmic representation of Native Americans has been an ongoing process in American cinema. The Walt Disney studios are no exception from the cinematic construction of 'Indians'. Native Americans have always an integral part of the studio's productions, most prominently featured in Disney's Peter Pan(1953), Lilo& Stitch(2002) and Brother Bear (2003). Since ''[m]ost Hollywood movies portray female Indians as unattractive squaws [...], pretty virgin princesses [...], or slinky villainesses […]'' (Brode 2) Disney tried their best to overcome these stereotypical images in their 1995 animated feature Pocahontas. Being the studios 33rd feature-length movie, Pocahontas retells the popular, tragic love story of the 'Indian Princess' of the same name and Captain John Smith, a British adventurer eager to conquer the New World. Smith and his companions arrive in the first British colony on American soil, namely Virginia, on behalf of the Virginia Company.

Pocahontas' tribe soon faces a conflict of interests, since the British colonists' leader, Governor Ratcliffe claims the tribe's territory as British property and eventually establishes Jamestown, the first British settlement in North America. A clash between both groups is inevitable. The fact that Ratcliffe imagines seemingly endless riches in the hands of the natives only fuels the conflict. Defying the struggle that surrounds both of them, Smith and Pocahontas soon develop a romantic relationship, overshadowed by the fact that Pocahontas father, Chief Powhatan wants her to marry the bravest warrior of the tribe, earnest Kocoum. Pocahontas soon sees herself in a position in which she has to reconcile both Natives and the British, since both groups are eager to drive each other off 'their'

land be it for gold or the good of their people. In a heroic conclusion, the Indian Princess not only brings peace to her home, but also saves the life of her beloved Smith, who is about to be executed by Powhatan, enraged by his daughter's seemingly constant disobedience.

Due to the limitations of this paper, it is impossible to give a full overview of the historical person Pocahontas. The following brief overview functions as additional information, providing the reader with some of the key moments in the life of the 'Indian Princess'. The folklorist and mythical character of the Pocahontas narrative make it impossible to provide rock-solid facts about her person. In this context, Dagmar Wernitznig stresses the fact that ''[a]ny consideration about Pocahontas, her life, character, and thoughts can only remain a reconstruction of white, male reports about her.'' (7) The only written proof of Pocahontas' existence was thus created by white, British writers, often in favor with the colonial system. Pocahontas was born in Virginia in1595, later baptized by the English and called Rebecca. She was eventually married to a tobacco planter, John Rolfe, a man who deeply believed in the idea that 'savages' could be civilized through marriage to a white man. It is not clear whether Pocahontas was a ''dummy in colonial politics'' or if she played along deliberately. Historical sources state that she was taken to England and even decided to stay there. Whether this was propaganda, used to promote colonialism, is not clear. Pocahontas died in 1617 in Gravesend, London (Wernitznig 6-22).

It is striking in this context, that in contrast to *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas'* plot is concretely linked to actual characters, places and events of the 'real world'. While in *Aladdin*, Disney had some freedom of setting and characters, the company –aiming at depicting the world 'as it is'– simply seemed to have no other choice than presenting the movie and its characters the way it does. Strikingly enough, Disney had to fall back on an exclusively White history to create its 'reality'. The fact that there are

very few reports of Pocahontas from a Native American prospective thus not only further blur Pocahontas as a person, it also highly influences the depiction of any filmic realization of her life, especially in the context of animation, where it is possible to give the 'Indian' princess –at least theoretically– any body imaginable.

Coming back to the analysis of the movie, it is striking that just as in *Aladdin* race, in Pocahontas is often defined subtly and ambivalently. From the very beginning sequences, Disney's Pocahontas stresses that the Native princess is in fact not like the stereotypical Disney Princess, but rather a ''heroine with a thousand faces'' (Brode 171). In one of the first scenes of the movie Pocahontas is characterized by her tribes most important males. The tribe's Chief, Pocahontas' father Powhatan, is reminded by the shaman Kekata of that fact that ''[Pocahontas] has her mother's spirit. She goes wherever the wind takes her'' (Pocahontas).

The story of Pocahontas' mother is not revealed throughout the movie. The story ambiguously plays with the term mother, referring either to Pocahontas' biological mother or Mother Earth. Spirituality is one of the keywords when reading Pocahontas. The protagonist, often described as ''environmentalist and pacifist'' (Brode 265), shares a very specific bond with the spiritual world of nature, which not only defines Pocahontas as a

person, but also the racial representation of herself and her tribe. The bond between the Native Americans and Mother Nature, the ''hoop that never ends'' (Pocahontas) is one of the leitmotifs in the movie, sharply contrasted to the ignorance and greed of the British colonists. A feature Edwards reads as involving the historical tale of Pocahontas into a '' […] visual figure of multiethnicity: it prevents actual interracial mixing from occurring while it explicitly makes Pocahontas's animated body visually multiethnic [...]'' (148) – an important aspect that will be discussed later in this section. Edwards furthermore finds that ''through its complex portrayal of the miscegenation trope'', i.e. the depiction of 'racial mix', the movie ''also racializes gender and culture, linking both gender roles and cultural behavior to racial identity''. Ultimately Pocahontas links miscegenation with multiculturalism (148).

However, the racial and ethnic distinction between the Native Americans and the British is not only defined by their looks. The British settlers are presented as conquerors, detached from nature. Their shiny, artificial armor reflects everything, whereas the Natives, wearing hides and leather, perfectly blend in with their environment. When the colonists, including John Smith, eventually arrive in North America on behalf of the Virginia company, their reactions reach from amazement to stereotypical white colonial self-confidence. Thomas, the youngest of the settlers, representing youthful naivety and pureness throughout the movie, is obviously overwhelmed by the sheer possibilities the New World offers:

Sailor: It's incredible!
Thomas: And it's all ours. I've never seen anything like it.
[…]
Thomas: What do you suppose the New World will look like?
John Smith: Like all the others, I suppose. I've seen hundreds of new worlds, Thomas. What could possibly be different about this one (Pocahontas)

While Thomas, from his naive white colonialist point of view, naturally considers the New World to be ‘his’, Smith reflects the idea of ‘ innate white supremacy’. For him, the New World offers nothing special. It is just a new turf to claim for the British crown, an idea that soon changes throughout the course of the movie. While Smith expresses hesitant respect paradoxically mixed with colonial arrogance in the beginning of the movie, his ideology changes as soon as he meets Pocahontas. The British adventurer does not seem to wonder why Pocahontas is suddenly able to speak perfect, idiomatic English. Greeting the attractive native with a handshake only undermines his ignorance in this situation. He comfortingly addresses Pocahontas, telling her not to be afraid, yet another proof of Smith's belief in white superiority and thus, at the same time the natural inferiority of Natives. Throughout their encounter, Smith, after having heard about Pocahontas' home, romanticizes about his ''village'', London and the progress and advantages of civilization, manifested in concrete entities such as carriages, bridges and solid houses, ultimately linking the concepts of Civilization and Whiteness:

Smith: We'll show your people how to use this land properly, how to make the most of it. […] We'll build roads and decent houses and –

Pocahontas: Our houses are fine.

Smith: You think that only because you don't know any better.

[...]

Smith: There's so much we can teach you. We've improved the lives of savages all over the world.

Pocahontas: Savages?

Smith: Uh, not that you're a savage

Pocahontas: Just my people.

Smith: Savage is just a word, uh, you know. A term for people who are uncivilized.

Pocahontas: Like me.

Smith: Well, when I say uncivilized, what I mean is, is -
Pocahontas: What you mean is, not like you. (Pocahontas)

Edwards sees *Pocahontas* filled with ''[...]a series of representational displacements''. According to her, racial mixture is written onto Pocahontas's body. At the same time, the phenomena Edwards calls ''Synthetic miscegenation'' (151) displaces and replaces the possibility for sexual miscegenation transforming the heroine into a

> […] historically-impossible multiethnic body – an anachronistic image composed of "aesthetically-pleasing" body parts drawn from American Indian, African American, Asian American, and Caucasian models. (151)

Taking a closer look at Pocahontas is not only crucial in the understanding of the movie, as she is the protagonist, but also in the context of race and ethnicity. Pocahontas is the embodiment of a Disney multiculturalism. While she naturally follows the style guide of a typical Disney princess i.e. a flawless, tall, thin, yet curvy woman with long hair, taking a closer look at her appearance reveals her crucial role for the reading of the movie. While Brode superficially considers Pocahontas ''[...]a caricature of all images of overripe female sexuality – specifically for […] the male gaze'' (265), the already introduced reading provided by Edwards serves as the best foundation of a close analysis of the character. Defining Pocahontas as a sex object is certainly valid t a certain extent, yet Brode's analysis misses the role the heroine's sex plays in the context of race. In this context, Edwards correctly remarks that Pocahontas' body

> […] signifies as a racialized sexual object on the screen, a "brown-skinned Barbie doll," a multiethnic, to use Mel Gibson's term, "babe" (qtd. in Tillotson C8). If she had been anything other than a beautiful Indian woman in this context, Smith might have shot first and asked questions later, as Governor Ratcliffe instructs all of the

colonists to do, rather than becoming entranced by her. (154)

Edwards thus does not commit the fallacy to oversimplify the role of sex and race and their connection. The fact that Smith falls in love with Pocahontas', or rather her looks make clear that such a constellation would not have been possible if the Englishman had met a male 'Indian'. Pocahontas role as a 'sex-symbol' thus plays an important role, as it is the heroine's appearances that allows a first contact and a enables both groups, Englishmen and Native Americans, a gradual understanding of each other. Sexual desire thus works as a first initiator of multiculturalism in the movie, a notion that is additionally interesting for the field of gender studies, as Pocahontas, as as Edwards phrases it, becomes ''[...] the racialized native sexual object for the colonizing male subject'' (154).

The perfect example of both of Pocahontas' embodied multiculturalism is explicitly visible in the 'Waterfall Scene', the point of the story in which Pocahontas meets Smith for the very first time, eventually juxtaposing both characters in a scene that looks almost like a classic Asian painting, featuring striking light/dark color codings. Pocahontas appearance is contrasted to the white foam of the waterfall. She is not immediately revealed as a human. Previous sequences introduced her as an almost animal-like being, accustomed to being outside and in tune with nature. Enhancing the link between nature and 'Natives' and thus characterizes the 'Indian' as more natural human beings while the English are clearly regarded as invaders of a peaceful, holistic realm. The scene serves a crucial function. It not only defines both characters, Smith and Pocahontas and their respective race and ethnicity, but rather introduces the already introduced possibility of 'racial mix', not only by two different human beings, but strikingly and literally embodied in the physical features of the heroine.

As a prerequisite, the making of the character Pocahontas has to be

mentioned at this point. Edwards quotes an anecdote featuring animator Glen Keane, a veteran when it comes to the depiction of race since he was also the main character creator of Disney's Tarzan and Aladdin. Keane not only highlighted Pocahonta's 'racial deviance' but also set her in the the context of previous Disney princesses:

> [...] Keane introduces his Pocahontas drawing to a studio audience by comparing it to his Ariel from Disney's The Little Mermaid. He draws Ariel, projecting her face onto a screen, then draws Pocahontas and overlays her onto Ariel. Keane tells the audience that because Pocahontas is "ethnic," her facial structure will be "the opposite" of Ariel's Caucasian one, and he points out what he describes as Pocahontas's "ethnic" features, such as her "Asian" forehead, which is much lower than Ariel's. In his narrative and literal juxtaposition of these two faces, Keane effectively describes a white norm versus a brown variation, a non-ethnic animated face versus an ethnic one. In his distinction between Ariel and Pocahontas, Pocahontas is no longer specifically American Indian but rather an undifferentiated visual compilation of non-white ethnicities. (Edwards 152)

In order to further enhance Pocahonta's 'otherness' Disney hired selected women of different origin that served as role models for the multicultural puzzle that eventually forms the heroine's body. Five women provided the animators with the pieces that complete Pocahonta's visual appearance, namely Pocahontas's voice and consultant to the film Shirley "Little Dove" Custalow McGowan, Filipino model Dyna Taylor, black supermodel Naomi Campbell and white supermodels Kate Moss and Christy Turlington.'' (Edwards 152)

It is striking in this context, that even within the Disney Company, Pocahontas caused quarrels among the people in charge. Jeffrey Katzenberg, head of Disney's animation department at the time, complained that Keane's creation resembles "the finest creature the human race has to offer" (Edwards 152), clearly alluding to the concept of an ideal meta-human, or as Edwards phrases it: ''[…] it figures an American body and urges its viewers to take up their roles as multicultural

citizens'' (162).

Pocahontas' alien appearance – one author even tags the Indian princess as a ''cyborg figurine […] a hybrid machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'' (Haraway 149 in Edwards 153)– is especially prominent when juxtaposing her to the other 'Indian' women presented in the film. While Edwards compares her to all women in the movie, stating that ''[…] Pocahontas looks almost as much like the Caucasian women bidding their husbands farewell on the docks in England as she does her fellow Powhatans ''(152), taking a look at Pocahonta's tribemates underlines her crucial role as a connecter of race and ethnicity, ''[…] fostering racial peace through cultural mediation'' (Edwards 158). In contrast to the protagonist, all other Indian women are presented as rather inconspicuous characters. While Pocahontas' body features clearly defined, edgy contours a classic hour glass shape that is inspired by European beauty ideals, the other Native women have rather round faces and a slightly darker complexion than the heroine. The reason for this seems obvious: On the one hand, Pocahonta's has to clearly stand out from the rest of the women, as she is the movie's protagonist. On the other hand, the reason why the heroine has to stand out is the second factor of her 'otherness', namely the already mentioned function of the

character as a multicultural, ideal human and mediator between the cultures.

Pocahontas is guided by a mystic, talking tree, Grandmother Willow, who serves as a mentor for the protagonist, helping the young woman to find her way, just like it aided Pocahontas' mother during her youth Although Pocahontas knows that she is connected to the earth and all the things that surround her, Grandmother Willow is a necessary trigger for the heroine's development, since it is the tree that makes her aware that ''[a]ll around you are spirits, child. They live in the earth, the water, the sky. If you listen, they will guide you. […]'' (Pocahontas). This advice is not only crucial for the protagonist's understanding of her surroundings, it also enables communication between Pocahontas and John Smith, since the heroine is suddenly able to speak English, after having ''listened with her heart'' (Pocahontas), yet again underlining the fact that Pocahontas serves as an almost supernatural link between the cultures.

Race in Pocahontas is basically defined by simply claiming that the respective group is either not 'White' or not 'Indian'. Being 'Indian' in Pocahontas means to life in an eternal, respectful connection with nature and the spirits. Presenting Native Americans either as spiritual pacifists or brave warriors, Disney transforms the trope of the Noble Savage and uses this reconstruction to shine a perfect light on Pocahontas and her tribe, or as Edwards phrases it ''Pocahontas signifies as America's first aristocrat, indigenous nobility; thus she creates an indigenously multicultural America'' (Edwards 162)

Edwards compares this depiction with movies such as *Dances with Wolves*, as Disney ''[...]romanticizes American Indian culture and offers it as a commodity for Anglo-American consumption'' (159), a notion that can certainly be agreed with. Multiculturalism, the leitmotif of the movie alters Disney's reality of past events to a degree that alienates some of the groups it depicts. Edwards quotes Kilpatrick in this context who states that

''Powhatan tribal member Custalow McGowan, hired as chief "American Indian consultant" to the film'' was quickly alienated by Disney's version of *Pocahontas,* as she noted that: "You're not honoring a nation of people when you change their history" (Edwards 159-160). McGowan expresses her mixed feelings about the Disney movie by mentioning that

> I was honored to be asked by them ... but I wasn't at the studio two hours before I began to make clear my objections to what they were they doing... they had said that the film would be historically accurate. I wish my name wasn't on it. I wish Pocahontas's name wasn't on it" (Edwards 159-160)

Just as Karaman and Wingfield's view on *Aladdin,* Edwards' opinion on *Pocahontas* is biased. Thus, uses biased opinions on the movie to prove her point, deliberately ignoring Native Americans who actually can identify with the 'Indians' depicted in the movie. However, it has to be stressed that Edwards, in contrast to many other authors, does not judge *Pocahontas* in the context of racism. She rather considers the movie as a ''[...] collapse of Pocahontas's culture into a vague connection with nature […] that serves the function to […] downplay cultural difference and foreground the sameness of the two cultures (159). Pocahontas thus depicts a melting-pot in the truest sense of the word.

The dividing line between Smith and the 'Indian' princess gradually blurs throughout the movie, finding its climax in the fact that both characters fall in love with each other. Pocahontas and Smith thus build a bridge between both cultures in a typical ideal Disney manner: Love can blur out all differences. It blurs out physical, ethnic and racial differences and creates a new human, without any tags attached. Edwards confirms this reading by stating that the film ''[...] seems to offer a mutual cultural assimilation, a "middle ground" of exchange'' (159) eventually leading to an encounter between Chief Powhatan and Smith, in which the Chief calls

the Englishman his brother.

It is not clear whether the Englishmen have assimilated to the ways of the Indians, or vice versa. The new relationship of both groups affirms the notion of a quasi meta-human being within the ever-present theme of *Pocahontas'* multiculturalism. While Edwards considers the ideological change of both groups as a technique ''[...]which deflates the violence of the colonial enterprise but does not question the integrity of the colonial project (159)'', it is clear that Disney aimed at something completely different.

Yet, the process that eventually leads to the multicultural understanding and assimilation is slow. Natives react to the sudden appearance of the British settlers neutral in the very beginning of the movie. In the first meeting of the Natives, the tribe reacts suspiciously, yet not hostile towards the strangers. Even if the members of the tribe claim that the men disembarking the ''strange clouds'' have a peculiar skin and ''[…] hair on their faces like dogs'' (Pocahontas), their chief still addresses the British as ''visitors''. Of course this diction changes throughout the movie. Having experienced the 'true face' of the intruders, shaman Kekata, soon describes the settlers as ''[…] not men like us but strange beasts with bodies that shine like the sun and weapons that spout fire and thunder. They prowl the earth like ravenous wolves consuming everything in their path'' (Pocahontas).

The term neutral terms ''visitors'' and ''strangers'' soon change into hostile denominations, such as ''beasts'', ''white demons'', ''palefaces'' and ''milky hides''(Pocahontas). While the Native Americans reflect a development through experience throughout Pocahontas, the British perspective is clear from the very beginning of the movie. Natives are nothing more but ''filthy little heathens'', ''savages'', ''Indians'', ''vermin that is barely even human'', ''hellish red'' and 'dirty shrieking devils'' (Pocahontas). In this context, Edwards quotes Pauline Turner Strong, who

points out that ''[…] the word "savage" dominates the film as settlers and

Natives both repeatedly hurl the epithet at each other in dialogue and in song''. According to Edwards, Turner Strong argues that Pocahontas ''[...]distorts the history of colonial uses of an ideology of "savagism" to justify exterminating and dispossessing native peoples because it tries to make the savagism seem reciprocal (Edwards 159)''.

Whiteness means ignorance, destruction and greed, perfectly impersonated in the colonists' leader, Governor Ratcliffe who ultimately defines his hate for the Natives right before the planned attack on their village, the result of what happens ''when races are diverse''. Ratcliffe's line ''They're not like you and me which means they must be evil'' is eventually contrasted to Kekata's parallel definition of the Whites: ''They're different from us which means they can't be trusted.'' (Pocahontas). In this context, Brode confirms this notion and stresses the destructive nature of the British depicted in Pocahontas in his reading of *Pocahontas.* He mentions the fact that Native Americans were hired to provide historical advisers who helped in creating a positive and realistic image of the Native Americans depicted in the movie (264-65) – the exact same advisers already introduced in this paper, i.e. the people that eventually became alienated by the movie. Still, Brode's observation affirms the already mentioned romanticized,

somewhat naive depiction of Native Americans in terms of race and ethnicity.

Opinions and emotions are eventually turned around: While the naivety of the Natives changes into suspicion and hostility, this process is reversed in the minds of the British. Hostility turns into greater understanding, not only for the ''savages'' but also for nature itself, ultimately showing Pocahontas and her people in the best possible light, since only they seem to be able to ''paint with all the colors of the wind'' (Pocahontas) and thus actively live and pass on a true understanding of the world.

When Smith eventually takes a ship home to England, the concept of multiculturalism is yet again highlighted for a last time, leaving the audience with a feeling that Smith takes something 'Indian' with him. Edwards remarks that Grandmother Willow's bark in this context serves as a symbol for Pocahontas' culture, resembling ''[…] a commodity that Smith can transport, consume and appropriate (159)''. What Edwards misses here is the fact that the bark does not simply serve the negatively connoted function of a 'souvenir' Smith takes home with him to ''consume''. It rather serves as a proof of the existence of the Native Americans and what they stand for. The –disneyfied– race, ethnicity and ideals of the Natives are all manifested in a concrete, natural entity that is carried around the world, eventually spreading the good word of multiculturalism and a greater reciprocal understanding.

3. Conclusion

Don’t matter what you look like
Don’t matter what you wear,
How many rings you got on your finger
We don’t care, No!, We don’t care!
Don’t matter where you come from
Don’t even matter what you are
A dog, A Pig, A Cow, A Goat We got ‘em all in here!
(Disney's The Princess and the Frog)

The Walt Disney Company is not inexperienced when it comes to race and ethnicity. *Dumbo* (1941), *Song of the South (based on the Uncle Remus stories by Joel Chandler Harris) (1946) and The Princess and the Frog are just three examples of an o*ngoing, constantly changing attempt at depicting race, especially 'Blackness' properly. *Dumbo* depicted Black workers in one of the very first scenes, erecting the tent of the little flying elephant's circus while singing that they didn't mind to be paid low wages, since they enjoyed working so much, singing: '"“We work all day, we work all night, we have no life to read and write, we’re happy [...] we don’t know when we get our pay, and when we do, we throw our money away *(Dumbo).*

Most prominently –and also most disturbingly for some viewers– the film additionally featured a gang of crows, including their leader *Jim Crow.* All of the birds are dressed in stereotypical 'black apparel' of the 1950s, sing a Jazz song and calling each other ''brother'' using a cliche 'Black' accent and diction. Even though clearly alluding to the trope of the 'jolly black man', a typical phenomenon of 19th century white attitude towards blacks, the crows depicted in *Dumbo* are the main initiators of Dumbo's eventual success by giving him a magic feather that enables him to fly. Most strikingly, the crows are the only characters in the movie who do not pick on Dumbo because of his enormous ears.

While *Dumbo* considered a Disney Classic, *Song of the South* seems to be one of the films Disney sooner likes to forget. Depicting black plantation workers –including a black mammy– and naturally the hero of the movie, Uncle Remus himself has caused much controversy among viewers and critics, eventually leading the Disney Company to delay the release of the movie on home video since 1986.

Apparently, Disney has learned its lesson when it comes to Blackness. In a daring approach to wipe away past accusations of racism and stereotypical depiction of Blacks, Disney Studios produced their newest attempt at depicting Blackness 'realistically', namely *The Princess and the Frog*. Strikingly enough, Disney does not use a African or African American tale to transfer their latest message of racial understanding and multiculturalism, but rather frames it into yet another 19th century European fairytale. The quote presented at the beginning of this conclusion, taken from a Disney movie not explicitly discussed in this paper, namely *The Princess and the Frog,* already gives an idea of what Disney's exact message and leitmotif of the movie is, a theme that is strikingly familiar in the context of this paper. Sarita McCoy Gregory summarizes exactly this theme in her article ''Disney’s Second Line: New Orleans, Racial Masquerade, and the Reproduction of Whiteness in The Princess and the Frog'', published in the Journal of African American Studies:

> Disney’s gumbo represents its utopian vision of a colorblind New Orleans which blends individuals from different cultures, races, and classes who are able to live and play together. Disney infuses its colorblind message in the body of a voodoo priestess, Mama Odie. Mama Odie is blind, living as a maroon deep in the bayou in harmony with a variety of swamp creatures. Disney gifts Mama Odie with “vision” that transcends color and class.

Disney's *Princess and the Frog* tells the story of Tiana, a hard working, always cheerful black working class girl, living in a Disney version of New Orleans during the 1920s, one of the high times of

discrimination against Blacks in the Southern states of the USA. Yet ''New Orleans, with its grand Garden District mansions and humble shotgun houses, looks just right'' (Wiltz) as a setting for a Disney Princess story. Yet, this fairy tale distinguishes itself from all previous Disney movies, as Tiana is soon turned into something neither royal, nor black or white, namely a frog. It is striking that Disney tells a tale of a black heroine, depicting her most of the time as a green skinned frog. A problematic depiction or as Wiltz bluntly phrases it:

> Why trot out the first with so much hoopla and self-congratulatory fanfare, only to submerge all that chocolate perkiness a third of the way through? Is Disney hedging its bets, afraid of letting too much blackness play front and center on the big screen?

Calling it a ''[…] disney-fied, gumbo-and-beignet making, blues belting, smart and feisty black girl pride'' Wiltz points out that there seems to be a certain longing for '' […] black celluloid images, images that reflect African-American life in all its complexity'', eventually summarizing the film as follows:

> Now, the whole idea of princes and princesses is a little hard to swallow for a film set in New Orleans in the Jim Crow-era 1920s. So writer/director Ron Clements has to turn things inside and out to make those Disney tropes fit. Princess Tiana is really the daughter of a gumbo-making, laborer father (Terrence Howard) and a seamstress mother (Oprah Winfrey) who makes clothes for the rich white family. (The patriarch of the family is named, God help us, Big Daddy.) Tiana grows up to be a hard-working waitress (Anika Noni Rose) with big dreams of opening her own restaurant, where she'll honor her dead father by making his gumbo recipe the toast of the town. Meanwhile, her best friend, Big Daddy's pretty blonde daughter, dreams of marrying her Prince. The Prince—Prince Naveen from fictional Maldonia—just happens to have just stepped off the boat in New Orleans, looking for good times and hopefully, a rich girl to marry. As it turns out, the Prince is broke. Not that empty pockets have altered his oversized sense of entitlement. Clearly the Prince is sorely in need of a little reeducation. ("You're a no-count,

> philandering, lazy bump on a log," Tiana tells him.) This being a Disney production, bad deeds and philandering, lazy ways do not go unpunished. Through some Voodoo skullduggery, the Prince is turned into a frog. Unfortunately for Tiana, she is too.

Disney's first real black fairytale thus shares many features with the two 'classic' movies discussed in this paper: Multiculturalism, racial blur, ambiguity and the depiction of 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of a culture, race and ethnicity. While on the one hand presenting Tiana as a hard working, independent black girl, Disney does not explain why exactly she has become like that, even though the movie shines some light on her family and their history, it never actually links Tiana's problems to her race, or in other words, the racism she has to face.

Tiana has to overcome two main obstacles, that according to wells resemble one of the guiding principles of animation, as the animation and the character themselves are both based on the problem and the process of solving it. While Tiana's first obstacle is not related to her race, namely the problem that she is suddenly turned into a frog, her second problem is closely linked to her social and racial background. Tiana needs money to buy her own restaurant while working several minimum wage jobs. The question is, if Disney simply constructed the second problem as an ideal problem for the heroine to overcome, or if Tiana's social status is a slight hint at a growing social criticism is never revealed. Gregory states in this context the importance of Mardi Gras that ''[...] helps define the subtle gradations of the city's social and racial caste system."

Nevertheless, the sheer fact that Disney puts the first black princess in the studio's history into a surrounding like that is by no means a coincidence or irrelevant. Gregory, however, finds that *The Princess and the Frog* still heavily relies on ''[…] on the reproduction of the ideology of whiteness that sanitizes the everyday lives of African-Americans and normalizes whiteness''. She mentions a specific scene, in which Prince

Naveen and his butler trade bodies, due to some mysterious voodoo magic. Magic itself is tightly attached to blackness in the context of the movie Be it positive –white– or negative –black– voodoo magic, just as darkness and mystery were presented in Aladdin, blackness and magic seem to be intrinsically linked to each other in *The Princess and the Frog.* Coming back to the body switch Gregory eventually links the very process to the trope of blackface, a tradition that in her point of view ''[…] blended the ideals of miscegenation and racial cross-dressing, and Disney inserts both of these into this film.

But what exactly is White, or better, Whiteness? In the context of animation and Disney movies, whiteness is often realized by a beige-pinkish color coding, further alienating the tag of the color from its concrete filmic realization. In terms of race and ethnicity, Gregory quotes Howard Winand, who states that whiteness is

> […] an over determined political and cultural identity nevertheless, having to do with socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, ideologies of individualism, opportunity, and citizenship, nationalism, and so on. Like any other complex of beliefs and practices, 'whiteness' is embedded in a highly articulated social structure and system of significations."

The absence of whiteness as a racial or ethnic tag is an issue that has been discussed for years, i.e. by Fanon. However, Bernardi states in the context of cinema, that a dominant cultural institution, the meaning of race and identity impact our lives and future, as cinematic representations, styles and stories are omnipresent. Race in cinema is thus ''neither fictional nor illusion It is real because it is meaningful and consequential; because it impacts real people's real lives. (xvi).'' Thus follows that it is not only the depiction of race and ethnicity of 'deviant' groups that is relevant for the reading of a Disney film or any other movie.

The definition of reality plays an important role in this context. It is of course true, that Disney frequently uses stereotypical images to convey

a certain message or to enhance a certain exotic atmosphere or 'otherness'. The question is: Where do these images, symbols and themes come from?

Coming back to an 'Arabian' topic Karaman and Wingfield find that in popular culture ''Disney is by no means the only offender'', stating that

> Popular culture aimed at children is replete with negative images of Arab women as belly dancers and harem girls, and Arab men as violent terrorists, oil "sheiks," and marauding tribesmen who kidnap blond Western women. […] A few years ago, Spencer Gift stores sold "Arab" Halloween masks with grotesque physical features, along with their usual array of goblin, demon, and vampire masks. The chain stocked no other ethnic masks.

The authors even find that in the education sector, images such as 'deserts' 'camels' and 'nomads' are prominent depictions of the Orient and Arabia, complaining that ''[e]ven some well-intentioned teachers use the Bedouin image as somehow typifying *Arab culture*. Having Karaman and Wingfield's finding in the back of the head, it does not seem a surprise why Aladdin, his companions and the setting of the story are depicted the way they are in the movie. The relationship of reality and the depiction of reality is a complex, interdependent network based on observation and mimicry. Quinn states in this context that especially the filmic interpretation of a novel creates a ''[...]dynamic relationship between a pair of texts that simultaneously modify one another'' (vii). Regarding *Aladdin* and its depiction of 'Arabs' then leads to the conclusion that the film's cinematic ''imagineering'' (Francavigla 73) is not only defined by Orientalism, 'real' Arabian culture and Western stereotypes, but itself modifies the depictions and connotations that are associated with the the concept of an 'Arab' as tag for an ethnicity or a race.

This notion is also applicable in the discussion of *Pocahontas.* Even though Edwards concludes that Pocahontas' depiction is a collapse of ''[...] all non-white ethnicities onto her body in one in order to make her a

spokesmodel for a reductive version of multiculturalism, one in which the visual marker of brownness stands in for cultural diversity (152).

Even though Nooshin quotes Morley and Robbins, who point out that, [...] "the very celebration and recognition of 'difference' and 'Otherness' may itself conceal more subtle and insidious relations of Power(1995, 115), the Disney company clearly focuses on commercial interested as well –as any company in any business branch. Nooshin quotes Turino in this context, stating that ''Exoticism is simply one source of distinction and novelty'' (241). Presenting the audience something new and exotic – in this case making race and ethnicity a novelty is one of the main factors, why Disney in fact no longer focus on 'White', Euro-centric fairytale exclusively.

Disney has its own history and provides the audience with a certain point of view, a perspective some authors regard as a substitute for history, oftentimes ''[...] following typical Disney themes: nostalgia, small-town America, the family farm, the American family as the basic social unit [...]'' (Synnott 54). Others even go so far as to stress that Disney's successful theme parks, Disney Land and Disney World ''repress the shame, vitality, and all traces of race-class-gender-sexuality of a more accurate history''(Wert 213) – a history that has been ''re-packaged, re-told, domesticated and rendered safe by being brought within the Disney realm: a kind of symbolic control over the rest of the world (Nooshin 243)''.

Disney World is thus not only the name of a theme park, it is rather the company's own little sphere, in which it realizes, perceives and produces its own reality, always following the spirit of the company's founder. In his paper about Disneyland's ride ''It's a small world'' Nooshin quotes Wilson who states that Walt Disney himself stated about the people visiting his theme pars that he wanted them to […] feel they're in another world"(240). The fact that *Disney World*, the park and the concept, are in

fact on the same planet, makes it often hard for Disney to channel its messages properly as they often lead to misunderstandings among the critics.

Francaviglia states in this context that Disney and Postmodernists have a lot in common in the context of their perception of reality, as both ''[...] rely on reinterpretations of scale, texture and historical theming to ''imagineer'' (a word coined by Disney's designers) large, integrated projects''. The concepts of race and ethnicity are in this context very much linkable to Francaviglia's findings. Race in Disney relies on constant observations, interpretations and reinterpretations of the social and historical context within which Disney produces and sells its products.

It is, however, unclear, how a reading of *Pocahonta's* can lead to the conclusion that the Disney version of the narrative aims to '' flatter the dominant culture (Edwards 162)'' or how *Aladdin*, depicting good AND bad 'Arabs' explicitly ''imagineers'' a pejorative image of a culture. It can rather be said, that Disney aims at highlighting different aspects of a specific culture, while implicitly tagging it with the latest, contemporary 'trends' that are linked to the respective group.

Giving a more concrete example of Disney's depiction of race and ethnicity a group of researchers found in their extensive study five major, concrete themes that emerged in relation to race and culture, namely:

- (a) negative representations of non-dominant cultures;
- (b) exaggerated class stereotypes;
- (c) only Western values and Christianity depicted;
- (d) characters who share similar values should stay/be together;
- (e) characters who share different values can be friends and create community together. (Towbin et al. 31-32)

Even though all of the listed features can be regarded as evident in the movies the actual presence, value and impact of each respective

factor is based on the reading and interpretation of the respective movie and its characters. Many critics seem to prejudiced when analyzing films such as *Aladdin, Pocahontas* or *Mulan* (Disney's filmic adaptation of a classic Chinese poem)*,* at least most of the papers used as resources for this papers made that either implicitly or explicitly evident, as many papers rather focus on stressing the negative depictions of race and ethnicity, while omitting the positive images. It seems in this context especially paradoxical, to stress the fact that *Aladdin* puts 'Arabs' into a bad light, while the story takes place within the same cultural context, with an actual 'Arabian' hero. Notions such as: ''Disney films also were replete with negative and stereotypical images of marginalized racial groups. Characters of color were portrayed as villainous or scary in many movies ''(Towbin et al. 36), seem therefore invalid to a certain extent.

While Towbin et al. Also refer to the positive depictions of non-whites, e.g. in *Pocahontas*, they completely ignore the fact that most of the Disney villains are indeed white. This is of course also based on the fact that most classic Disney movies take place in Europe, e.g. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* a movie presenting the cruel Judge Frollo –an embodiment of Western order, structures AND fundamentalist Christianity– while presenting 'Gypsies' and the 'Hunchback', Quasimodo as the heroes of the movie, proving that non-dominant cultures are in fact represented positively.

These findings are difficult to generalize, as some scholars go so far as to base their findings on class differences between monkeys, intercultural misunderstandings among mice, and the species (rather than racial) differences between black panthers and other animal characters. The readings of such fictional interactions do not necessarily apply to race and ethnicity in Disney, as we are not reading an animated movie such as Animal Farm (1954)

The definition of 'racism' and linking or accusing Disney to the term

in this context seems to very much lie in the eye of the beholder. A possible proof for this are the very different views on Disney and its products. Ultimately it seems that Francaviglia's concluding statement offers the most diplomatic solution to the problem as he states that

> What I am saying is nothing less than that life now imitates art, and that those who think of Disney's version of history as unreal need to redefine reality in order to understand what is occurring. (73)

Due to the limitations of this paper, it is of course impossible to analyze every aspect of race and ethnicity in the Disney movies presented in this paper. A larger corpus and a more extensive analysis of films would lead to more accurate results, while a diachronic comparison of Disney movies from selected decades could highlight eventual changes in the depiction of race and ethnicity, or even more precise changes in the company's attitude towards those issues.

Additionally taking a look at films depicting other races and ethnicities, such as the animated representation of the Chinese and the Huns in Disney's *Mulan* could be the foundation of an interesting paper, based on a Disney perspective of the most world's largest race and ethnicity. In the context of African American studies, a close reading Disney's most successful film ever, *The Lion King* would certainly provide insights into Walt Disney's depiction of African and African American tradition, themes and tropes.

It would also be interesting to investigate empirically how recipients i.e. how the consumers of Disney products –especially the main target group, i.e. children– react to a 'disneyfied' version of different races race and/or ethnicities. A comparison of more, or even all Disney movies would ultimately lead to a better understanding of the company's filmic realization of the races they depict, providing further insight and starting points for an analysis of the global aspects and worldwide cultural impact

of the Disney Company

Ultimately comparing Disney's movies in terms of race and ethnicity to those of other studios could provide valuable information about the development in animation itself. Since ''[...][discrepancies between different Euro-centric perceptions of non-Europeans whom Europeans have identified as natural,or primitive, [are] hardly new (Gooding-Williams 374)'' taking a comparative look at the animated depiction of Whites and non-Whites, juxtaposing it to other genres and pieces of art would eventually lead to more complete image of the respective society's understanding and representation of the culture it aims to depict.

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5. Zusammenfassung der Arbeit in deutscher Sprache

Spielen Race und Ethnizität spielen immer noch eine Rolle in zeitgenössischen Zeichentrickfilmen?

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich ,interdisziplinär angesiedelt in den Bereichen Literatur, Film-und Kulturwissenschaften, mit der Analyse von zwei ausgewählten animierten Disney-Filmen, beide von ihnen kommerziell erfolgreiche Kinoblockbuster.

Die zentrale Forschungsfrage meiner Arbeit lautet daher: Wie werden Rasse und Ethnizität in Walt Disney Filmen präsentiert? Ich werde versuchen, mögliche Antworten und Erklärungen zu dieser Frage zu geben, zu diskutieren und sie schließlich anderen Ideen und Erkenntnissen gegenüberzustellen.

Bisher wurden viele Arbeiten über die Walt Disney Company, ihren Einfluss auf Kultur, ihre wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen und natürlich die Darstellung von Rasse geschrieben. Die Meinungen im Bezug auf Rasse und Ethnizität könnten dabei nicht vielfältiger sein.
Oft kritisiert für seine Darstellung einer typischen ''weißen, konservativen Mittelklassefamilie'' stößt das Unternehmen auf der einen Seite auf harsche Kritik, während es auf der anderen Seite für seine Inklusion, seinen Multikulturalismus gefeiert wird.

Natürlich gibt unzählige wissenschaftliche Arbeiten die sich mit dem Hauptprodukt der Disney Company, dem abendfüllenden Zeichentrickfilm beschäftigen. Kaum ein Studio scheint einen so hohen Einfluss auf die (Pop) Kultur zu haben wie Walt Disney. Es scheint daher nicht verwunderlich, dass unzählige Wissenschaftler und Filmkritiker ihre Arbeiten der Analyse von Disney-Filmen gewidmet haben.

Allerdings scheinen Rasse und ethnische Herkunft eine

untergeordnete Rolle in diesem Zusammenhang spielen. Forschung über diese Aspekte in Disney-Filmen beschränken sich oftmals auf bestimmte Wissenschaftsbereiche, wie Linguistik, Pädagogik und Arbeiten aus den Bereichen Film und Gender Studies

Neben der Analyse der verschiedenen Filmen, habe ich auch die Absicht, einige Aspekte der jeweiligen Filmen in Bezug auf Animation hervorheben und zu versuchen, sie mit meiner Analyse zu verbinden. Ich will jedoch nicht nur versuchen, die Darstellung der verschiedenen Rassen und Ethnien die Handlung des Films zu verbinden, sondern zudem Fragen beantworten wie: Wie ist eine spezielle Rasse oder ethnischen Herkunft im Film dargestellt? Widersprechen sich die verschiedenen Darstellungen oder ergänzen einander, oder stehen sie in keiner Relation zum allgemeinen, oftmals stereotypen, westlichen Bewusstsein?

Der Schwerpunkt der Analyse liegt daher auf einen Versuch herauszufinden, warum und wie Disney bestimmte Techniken verwendet und in welchem Maße die dargestellte, animierte Darstellung der jeweiligen Race entspricht

Der Teil meiner Arbeit unmittelbar nach dieser Einführung ist in zwei Teile unterteilt. Der erste Abschnitt, betitelt **1.1 Stereotypes, Race and Ethnicity** soll versuchen, dem Leser Begriffe wie Race, Ethnie und Stereotypen vorstellen. Aufgrund der Tatsache, dass sich diese Arbeit mit mit literatur-, film- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Themen befasst, ist es nicht mein Wunsch, eine umfassende und detaillierte Analyse von Race, der gesamten Filme oder der Charaktere zu geben. Der vielseitige Charakter umstrittener Begriffe und Konzepte wie Rasse und Ethnizität erlaubt keine Oberflächlichkeit oder Verallgemeinerungen. Ein Versuch, sie vollständig zu erfassen und zu beschreiben Trauma Rennen ist daher von Anfang an zum Scheitern verurteilt.

Die einzige Möglichkeit einer Beschreibung ist daher, die Begriffe auf bestimmte Muster zu untersuchen und diese sorgfältig mit plausiblen

Definitionen, Theorien oder Überlagerungen zu verknüpfen, ohne dabei oberflächlich zu arbeiten. die zu sein, ohne zu oberflächlich plausibel erscheinen.

Allerdings ist es unmöglich, eine "Race" und "Ethnizität" in feste Definition zu zwängen und es ist nicht mein Wunsch, dies während meiner Arbeit zu versuchen. Ich werde vielmehr versuchen meine Lesart der Filme und ihrer jeweiligen Darstellung von Race und Ethnizität in ausgewählten Szenen und Figuren den Ergebnissen anderer Autoren gegenüberzustellen

An dieser Stelle muss zudem betont werden, dass aufgrund von Lesbarkeit und dem generellen Fluss des Textes, umstritten Begriffe wie 'arabisch, asiatisch' oder 'schwarz' im Rahmen dieser Arbeit in einer unvoreingenommene Weise verwendet. Sie fungieren vielmehr als Marker, die bestimmte Aspekte der Darstellung von Rasse und Ethnizität in den jeweiligen Filmen, die genauer in den Kapiteln dieser Arbeit diskutiert werden, betonen.

Die zweite einführende Teil meiner Arbeit, **1.2. Disney Animation: A Brief Overview** wird dem Leser schließlich einige wichtige Konzepte der Disney Animation, die als Hintergrund-Informationen, die das Verständnis der Mentalitäten der Disney Company und die verschiedenen Techniken der Animation, die in den Filmen angewendet verdeutlichen sollen.

Die zweite und wichtigste Teil meiner Arbeit mit dem Titel **2. Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's Animated Movies**, wird aus zwei verschiedenen Teilen, die jeweils einen genaueren Blick auf Rasse und Ethnizität in jeweils einem Disney-Film werfen, bestehen. Ich werde dabei meine Analyse hauptsächlich auf die Charaktere beschränken, deren Merkmale ich in Bezug auf die Darstellung von Race und Ethnie als zentral erachte, ohne dabei jedoch wichtige Aspekte, wie etwa Nebencharakteren und das Umfeld in dem die Filmhelden ihre Abenteuer erleben außer Acht

zu lassen.

Die Arbeit wird jedoch keine detaillierte Analyse aller in den jeweiligen Filmen vorgestellten Charaktere beinhalten, da eine solche Analyse schlicht den Umfang dieser Arbeit überschreiten würde. Allerdings ist es natürlich unmöglich, über ein einzelne Figur isoliert von den anderen Charakteren im jeweiligen Film zu sprechen. Da alle Figuren eines Films und daraus folgend, ihre Geschichten oftmals untrennbar miteinander verbunden sind, wird meine Arbeit zudem ausgewählte Nebencharaktere, sowie die Umgebung, in der die Handlug stattfindet betrachten, da eine Nichtbeachtung unweigerlich zu einer unangemessenen Beschreibung der Filme führen würde.
Als Corpus für meine Forschung, wählte ich zwei animierte Disney-Filme – Aladdin und Pocahontas-Beide Filme entstanden unmittelbar nach oder während der sogenannten 'Disney Renaissance' (1989-1994). Einer Zeit, die aus Disney Sicht ''eines der größten Comebacks in der Unterhaltungsgeschichte darstellte'' (Desowitz).

Allerdings wählte ich die Filme nicht nur aufgrund der Tatsache, dass sie alle sehr erfolgreich an den Kinokassen waren und somit einen scheinbar hohen Einfluss auf ein großes Publikum hatten, sondern vielmehr aufgrund der Tatsache, dass sie herausstehende Beispiele einer disneyfizierten Art Race und Ethnizität zu präsentieren sind.

Im dritten und letzten Teil meiner Arbeit, der **Conclusion**, werde ich schließlich meine Ergebnisse zusammenfassen, diskutieren sie zu einem gewissen Grad mit einigen anderen, wichtigen Disney-Filmen verknüpfen, die in dieser Arbeit nicht ausdrücklich erwähnt werden können. Ich werde zudem versuchen, meine Erkenntnisse den verschiedenen Meinungen, Theorien und Ideen anderer Autoren gegenüberzustellen.

6. Erklärung

Ich versichere hiermit, dass die Arbeit ‚**Race and Ethnicity in Walt Disney's Animated Movies**' von mir selbst und ohne jede unerlaubte Hilfe angefertigt wurde, dass sie noch an keiner anderen Stelle zur Prüfung vorgelegen hat und dass sie weder ganz noch in Auszügen veröffentlicht worden ist. Die Stellen der Arbeit – einschließlich Tabellen, Karten, Abbildungen usw. –, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, habe ich in jedem einzelnen Fall kenntlich gemacht.

Bonn, 28.09.2012

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